



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

TITLE: An Alternative to Distracted Living

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Jesus calls us to sit at his feet to enjoy his friendship and to benefit from his Lordship.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:38-42

Today's scripture lesson comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, verses 38 to 42.

Starting at verse 42:

While they were traveling, He entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what He said.

But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand."

The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!

Have you ever tried to talk to someone, maybe ask a question, and you realize the other person is not listening to you? You get the idea that the other person is thinking about something else - that person is distracted.

There is a story in the Bible about two sisters, Mary and Martha who were friends of Jesus. Jesus came to visit them. Martha was busy doing things and Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to him. Martha complained that Mary was not helping her with all the things she had to do. Jesus said, "**Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the good part...**".

We may feel like we have many things to do, but we must remember that when our friends or family members want to talk to us it is best to stop what we are doing and give them our full attention. In this way we honor those who are reaching out to us. We let them know we really care what they have to say.

Mary chose to become very quiet and listen to Jesus. She really wanted to hear what he had to say. That is what we do when we pray and worship God. Becoming very quiet and listening is a way of honoring God.

Sometimes you have to wonder if anyone could please Jesus. Jesus didn't give many Attaboy's or Attagirl's. He didn't often say thanks. He didn't often tell people that they had done well. He didn't seem particularly concerned that he might bruise someone's self-esteem.

Sometimes, Jesus seemed downright rude. That happens in our Gospel lesson today. Jesus came to the home of his dear friends, Martha and Mary. He had visited their home before, perhaps many times.

- On one occasion, he raised their brother, Lazarus, from the dead (as we see in John 11).
- Shortly thereafter, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair (again in John 12).

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus is making his last visit to the home of Martha and Mary. Luke has been telling us that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, where he will die. Martha and Mary live in Bethany, which is near Jerusalem. With Jerusalem just around the corner, Jesus doesn't have long to live, and he knows it. He's been telling the disciples that he will die, but they don't understand him. Luke says that "they were afraid to ask him about this saying".

On this occasion, Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. It is odd that Luke doesn't mention Lazarus, Martha's brother, because property typically resided in the man's name. Wasn't this Lazarus' home? But Luke tells us that Martha welcomed Jesus into HER home. Then Luke tells us that Martha had a sister, Mary. Presumably it was Mary's home too, but Martha was clearly in charge.

Martha was distracted by many tasks. We know how that feels, don't we! Company coming! Floors to sweep! Windows to wash! Towels to hang! Food to cook! You can do some of those things ahead of time, but you can't cook the food ahead of time. You can't serve the guests ahead of time. Once Jesus arrived, Martha was busy, busy, busy!

Then Martha looked over her shoulder, and what did she see? She saw Mary, her sister, sitting on the floor, listening to Jesus. Never a shrinking violet, Martha complained to Jesus, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?" Suddenly, it was Jesus' fault that Martha was busy and distracted! "Lord, do you not care!" "Lord, can you not see!" "Lord, don't you care that my sister left me to serve alone? Ask her therefore to help me!".

But Jesus said—and this is the point that he seems almost rude—Jesus said, "**Martha, Martha...**" Can't you hear the exasperation in his voice?

**"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled by many things,
but one thing is needed.
Mary has chosen the good part,
which will not be taken away from her".**

If I had been Martha, that would have been it! I would have turned off the stove and shut down the kitchen. All right, Jesus, if you want me to listen, I will listen. Where would you like me to sit, Jesus? Worried! You were right! I was worried! Distracted! Right again! I was distracted by many things! But I promise, Jesus, that I'm not worried or distracted now. I'm sitting and listening—perfectly relaxed!

And, of course, I would wait to hear the sounds of stomachs grumbling! "Are you folks hungry? Well, I'm so sorry! I don't think that there's a thing to eat in the house." And I would gloat—not outside where anyone could see it, of course, but inside. I would think, "Serves you right! Next time, Jesus, keep your sharp tongue in its holster! A little hunger will teach the Teacher!"

The irony, of course, is that Jesus had dealt with a food shortage not many days earlier. Jesus had told his disciples to feed a crowd of five thousand people. The disciples had said, "What do you mean, give them something to eat? There are thousands of people here, Jesus! Do you know how much food we have? We have five loaves of bread and two fish! That's it!" But Jesus had taken the five loaves and two fish and had fed the whole crowd. There was even food left over—twelve baskets of food. So, you see, if Martha had decided to sit and listen, nobody would have gone hungry. Jesus would have provided.

It's also worth noting that, just prior to the story of Martha and Mary, Jesus had told the parable of the Good Samaritan. In that story, the hero was a person just like Martha—a doer—a person who got the job done—who expressed his caring in tangible actions—a busy man—a man who got his hands dirty in the service of others. Jesus made this busy man the hero of the parable. Jesus wasn't against active, busy, serving people! So why didn't Jesus encourage Martha in her service? In her busyness? She, too, was taking care of people. Why not make Martha the hero of this story?

Note that the Good Samaritan had provided what the wounded victim needed. He bandaged the victim's wounds, took him to the nearest town, and provided money for his care. The wounded man didn't need someone to sit and listen. He needed medical care. The Samaritan provided that care.

Jesus' situation was different. His time was growing short. He was headed for his cross. Soon, he would enter Jerusalem where he would die. He had come for a last visit with Martha and Mary, old and beloved friends. He didn't need a fancy last meal. He needed time with his friends.

Furthermore, Martha and Mary needed time with Jesus. In the future, they would look back on this last visit as one of the truly special moments of their lives. Jesus, a man whom everyone wanted to see, had come to their home. He had honored them with his presence. He had only a little time remaining in his short life, and he had chosen to spend it with them. What a special moment! What a tragedy if Martha were to miss it by working in the kitchen.

This story reminds me of my last visit home before my dad passed away. My dad was lying in his bed, dying from Parkinsons. I had visited him when I could, but found it difficult to sit there for long periods of time. It troubled me to observe his discomfort. I wanted to do something to distract myself from the reality that I didn't want to face. I spent some of my time with my dad, but I also busied myself with helping my mother around my parents' home.

Later that night, my dad passed away. Even then, I did not regret the wasted moments. Even then, I was running from the reality that I didn't want to face. Now, many years later, I would do things very differently. I wish that I could go to my parent's house in the morning and leave at night. I wish that I could take a book to read while my dad slept. I would sit at his feet. When he awoke, I would be there beside him. That would have been what Jesus called "the better part." Those would have been precious moments that nobody could ever take from me.

We, like Martha, are busy, worried, and distracted by many things. We are trying to balance claims on our lives by family, friends, church and work. We cannot do it all, but we try. Like Martha, we grow resentful because other people are not pulling their share of the load.

- We're critical of our husband, because he doesn't help around the house—or our wife, because she is always nagging about money.
- We're critical of co-workers, who don't share our dedication to the job.
- We're critical of our children, who don't keep their rooms neat.

Is this a happy way of life? Of course not. Is there a way out? Yes, there is. We need to spend a little time at Jesus' feet. We need to spend a little time reading the scriptures—a little time in prayer—a little time getting centered—a little time away from our everyday busyness—a little time letting the Lord have his way in our lives—a little time letting the Lord set the direction for our day—a little time at Jesus' feet.

This is what Jesus called "the better part." He said that Mary had chosen the better part. If we will choose the better part, Jesus will fill us with his presence. He will help us to sort out our tangles. He will help us to do the important things and to accept the fact that we can't do everything. He will help us to avoid becoming resentful, nagging persons. A little time with Jesus is, to the human being, what oil is to an automobile. With it, everything runs more smoothly.

Two questions! First question: Can we afford to spend a little time with Jesus each day? The answer, of course, is no. We cannot afford the time. We're too busy. There are too many claims on our lives. It sounds like a great idea, but it just isn't practical.

Second question: Can we afford NOT to spend a little time with Jesus each day?

- Can we afford to continue in our worry and distraction?

- Can we afford to spend our days going this way and that, with no guiding light to set our direction?
- Can we afford to go through life with our deepest needs unmet—with a hollow place at the center of our lives?
- Can we afford to be like Martha, too busy—too worried—too distracted to find much pleasure in life?

Try an experiment this week. Set your alarm fifteen minutes early. Get up, turn on the coffeepot, and sit down with your Bible for a few minutes. Read one story from one of the Gospels. Just one story. Then spend a couple of minutes reflecting on that story. Then spend a few minutes in prayer. Ask Jesus to help you that day. Ask Jesus to help you to get your heart in the right place. Pray for your husband or wife. Pray for your children. Pray for your neighbors. Pray for your enemies. Then say, Amen, and go about your business. Fifteen minutes at Jesus' feet will change your day. Fifteen minutes at Jesus' feet...will change your life.

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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